

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 08853 150707Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2523

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8853

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OGEN, LE
SUBJECT: VOA CORRESPONDENT ROBERTS' VISIT TO LEBANON

REF: STATE 292748

1. ROBERTS CALLED ON EMBASSY PAO IMMEDIATELY UPON HIS ARRIVAL, AND ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE ON DEC 9. LIAISON AND UNDERSTANDING WERE COMPLETE. ROBERTS SCRUPULOUSLY OBSERVED RESTRICTIONS ON HIS ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON AS OUTLINED IN REFTEL. HE TOLD PAO THAT HE HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN FULLY BRIEFED ON THESE RESTRICTIONS BEFORE HIS ARRIVAL IN BEIRUT (DESPITE USIA WASHINGTON ACCEPTANCE OF RESTRICTIONS RECOMMENDED BY DEPARTMENT AS INDICATED PARA TWO REFTEL).

2. ROBERTS WAS UNABLE TO OBTAIN MUCH INFORMATION ON RECONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES, BUT THIS WAS NO FAULT OF HIS: EMBASSY HAS ENCOUNTERED SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES. GOL DID NOT YET APPEAR PREPARED TO DISCUSS RECONSTRUCTION PLANS WITH ANYBODY EXCEPT IN THE BORADEST POSSIBLE TERMS. DESPITE SEVERAL ATTEMPTS, ROBERTS WAS UNABLE TO ARRANGE APPOINTMENT WITH SALIM AL-HUSS, AS EMBASSY HAD RECOMMENDED. HUSS AT THE TIME WAS PRESIDENT SARKIS' LEADING EXPERT ON RECONSTRUCTION, BUT HE WAS ABOUT TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER.

3. ROBERTS DID CALL ON GHASSAN TUEINI, BOTH IN HIS CAPACITY AS MINISTER OF INFORMATION IN THE OUTGOING KARAMI GOVERNMENT, IN LINE WITH PARA TWO-D REFTEL, AND AS LEADING FIGURE IN RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING IN NEW
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GOVERNMENT.

4. WHEREAS EMBASSY DOES NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE TIME HAS YET ARRIVED TO ESTABLISH PERMANENT VOA PRESENCE IN LEBANON DUE TO SECURITY SITUATION, WE BELIEVE PERIODIC VISITS SUCH AS ROBERTS HAS MADE ARE USEFUL BOTH TO GET LEBANON'S STORY INTO VOA CHANNELS, AND TO PRESERVE VOA-GOL CONTACTS FOR THE FUTURE, AND WE RECOMMEND THAT ROBERTS OR OTHER APPROPRIATE VOA REPORTERS CONTINUE TO VISIT BEIRUT. WE DO EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL FOLLOW GROUND RULES LAID DOWN IN REFTEL, CALL ON EMBASSY BEFORE SEEING LEBANESE, AND BE SUBJECT TO EMBASSY SECURITY GUIDANCE WHICH WE WOULD MAKE AS LIBERAL AS SITUATION WARRANTS BEARING FULLY IN MIND OBJECTIVE OF VOA REP'S ACTIVITIES.
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